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GENRES OF *PINOCCHIO*: FOLKTALE AND FAIRYTALE

Allie Pence

The story of *Pinocchio*, written by Carlo Collodi, is filled with situations that in comparison to what is possible in the real world would seem to be magic. The fact that magical concepts are used in Collodi's story would make people believe that *Pinocchio* is a fairytale. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines fairytale as, "A story (for children) involving fantastic forces and beings (as fairies, wizards, and goblins). A story in which improbable events lead to a happy ending" (Merriam). Despite the story containing some enchanted qualities; the novel, *Pinocchio*, has more characteristics of a folktale that teaches a morale lesson to its audience. A folktale is defined as, "a story made up and handed down by the common people" (Merriam). His story contains qualities of both genres. He does this in order to better relate his messages to a young audience. Disney's rendition of the tale of *Pinocchio* also attempts to reach this younger audience. He accomplishes this task by taking out some of the folktale ideals that Collodi utilizes, and instead uses fairylike characteristics to better reach his viewers. Walt Disney's film *Pinocchio* has been adapted from Carlo Collodi's original work and is within the fairytale genre; whereas Collodi's novel, *Pinocchio*, is considered to be a folktale. Even though both versions tell similar stories; the differences in genres were made to better reach a children audience, but with differing cultures and times.

Disney's interpretation of Collodi's novel *Pinocchio* differs greatly in the content included as well as the approach taken to communicate lessons. Both fairytales and folktales share the characteristic of being instructive to their audience. However, the method that Disney uses to depict lessons is accomplished using magical qualities. This is what creates the idea that the film is considered a fairytale. For example, Disney puts emphasis on the magical characteristics of the Blue Fairy by making her appear from the stars then perform extraordinary tasks that are not possible in the real world. The fairy is able to make a puppet talk, and later she turns him into a real boy (Pinocchio). This is obviously not possible in the real world, but Disney portrays the action to be effortless because it is magical. The book also contains a similar character: the fairy with blue hair. She ends up acting more as a mother or sister figure to Pinocchio and is used to progress the story and teach Pinocchio lessons as the story develops (Collodi). Disney plays with this idea and the fairy acts in the film as a character without strong context within the story. Because of this, the fairy primarily appears within the film only to perform magical acts.

Collodi's version of *Pinocchio* contains some magical qualities but generally follows the genre of a folktale. Pinocchio's story draws from traditional Italian stories and other adventurous tales, a common characteristic amongst folktales. "It relies heavily on the Tuscan novella or short-story tradition to which Boccaccio's *Decameron* belongs, and also on classical sources, such as Homer and Dante...the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Divine Comedy* to the structure and style of *Pinocchio*" (West 167). Folktales typically come from oral traditions and stories that can be passed down. Oral traditions of folk tales can also be seen, even on the first page, with the opening dialogue. The narrator begins by saying, "Once upon a time, there was.... 'A king!' my little readers will say at once. No, children, you're wrong. Once upon a time, there was a piece of wood" (Collodi 3). The author does this to set up the mood of telling a story for the children as if it were spoken to them, just as a storyteller would typically start. The genre of a folktale is typically known for being for the common people. The idea of oral traditions existed because common people wanted to enjoy stories, but not everyone was always literate. Collodi ties in this idea by inferring that the kids will say "A King", and then he surprises them by saying "a piece of wood". This shows that he wants to appeal to not just the high class, but to entice all (Marrs). Collodi pulls in legends, uses oral traditions, and attempts to reach every young child by following the characteristics of a folktale.

In comparison to Disney's film and approach with magical concepts; the way that Collodi teaches moral lessons is vital in what constitutes the story as a folk tale. Both the film and the book aim to teach moral lessons to the audience, but the book approaches the morale lessons by putting more emphasis on what to take away from a situation. Folk tales often give caution to readers about possible outcomes from various actions and behaviors.

Disney's film addresses these lessons. This is seen when Pinocchio sets off to go to school, but then is distracted and changes paths after meeting the fox, Honest John and his cat friend Gideon (Pinocchio). In the film, the lesson that the young puppet should receive an education is important for the audience. The fact that he gets pulled away then into trouble is less obvious a lesson for the audience to grasp. But in Collodi's novel, the importance of receiving an education is addressed in various situations. Then the punishments for not going to school are more directly associated with lack of going. Pinocchio's friend peer pressure him to skip school by saying, "Who cares about school? We can go to school tomorrow. One day more or less of school- we'll still be the same old jackasses." Pinocchio then struggles with

this by saying his mother would not approve and that his teacher would be upset. But Pinocchio gives in by saying, "Then let's go! And the last one there's a rotten egg!" (Collodi 94-95). The cautions that Collodi sets up for his readers are more obvious in his novel than in the film. This idea of cautious lessons is one that folklores and fairytales have in common, but still can be different.

The genres that the two versions of *Pinocchio* take on play a vital role in reaching their audiences. Both Disney and Collodi aim for a children's audience, but they differ in the fact that the children come from different cultures and time differences. *Pinocchio* was born in 1881-1883 in Italy. Collodi originally wrote only the first 15 chapters in a children's magazine, *Corriere dei piccolo* (Jeanet). He then wrote the rest of the chapters in response to the high demand from his readers. Collodi uses the genre of folktale and exaggerations of moral lessons to appeal to the Italian audience at the time and draw in the public to enjoy his stories. Collodi's use of humor in his novel is better catered towards the Italian culture at the time. An example is when Pinocchio walks through the woods and comes across the serpent in the middle of the road. This is supposed to be humorous because of the interaction Pinocchio has with the serpent and simply because the people expect a troll and it is humorous. This goes over most American's heads as a humorous aspect (Collodi 70-72). Meanwhile, to reach high popularity in America with his film version of *Pinocchio*, Disney turns the more folktale version of the story into a magical rendition of the classic version. Disney knows that the fairytale concept is one that his audience enjoys and expects; especially after the success of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. By taking more magical elements and eliminating the Italian folklore from the story, the American audience in the 1940s can better relate and enjoy the film. It is also important to understand world history for the release of the film. During this time, World War II was in progress and Italy was a part of the Axis powers. There are less Italian aspects within the film and as some of the more realistic ideals that are included in Collodi's version fit to Italian culture were eliminated, it made Disney's story seem more magical because the realistic actions were replaced with magical ideas. Disney most likely left out some of the Italian ideals from the plot and changes the genre to fairytale for this reason. Both Collodi and Disney catered the genre of the story to better fit the young audiences of their cultures at the time.

The differing genres of fairytale and folktale play a vital role in the telling of *Pinocchio*. Disney uses the genre of fairytale in his telling of the story by performing magical actions that are only possible in fairytales, such as bringing Pinocchio to life. The novel performs with some magical acts, but in actuality it follows more of a folktale genre. Folktales are based off legends of oral traditions. Collodi's book establishes itself from the beginning to be for the common people and a spoken dialogue based upon tales of other legends.

In addition, both the film and the novel give caution to readers through problems that Pinocchio faces in the story. Collodi's novel more closely follows a folktale's path of teaching lessons because it focuses on the problem and how the character learns from these lessons. Both Collodi and Disney are clever in arranging the story with different genres because it better fits the young audiences they are trying to reach based upon the time and cultures they were released in. Disney includes more magic and eliminates Italian aspects of the film to better reach an American audience during World War II. Collodi uses a folktale genre to appeal to the common people and include humor that is better fit for a young Italian audience in 1881. Both Collodi and Disney are smart by customizing the genre of the story of *Pinocchio* to better fit their target audience in order to gain popularity within their cultures in their periods of time.

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